

Legislative Publications

Debates

Debates

by
Dr. Eileen Goltz

Note: Printed debates, whether they be Canadian, Ontarian, British, etc,... are commonly referred to as **Hansard**. This is in honour of the Hansard family which reported and published the British Debates in the nineteenth century. Thus, Hansard is an umbrella term which must be qualified by Canada, Ontario, Britain, etc,... to distinguish one set of Debates from another.

The House of Commons

1) Early Debates

The **Confederation Debates** are the only example of debates published before Confederation. The full title of these debates is **Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of the Confederation of the British North American Provinces**. They are located at the J.N. Desmarais Library (**REF-DOC CA CP X1 D25**).

The Debates of the early Canadian Parliaments were not officially recorded or published. The only record available has been taken from contemporary newspaper reports. These **newspaper debates** are available on **microfilm** at the J.N. Desmarais Library (**CA1 X1 D23**). These debates are indexed at the end of each volume.

Printed Debates for the years 1867 to 1872 are available in English only at the J.N. Desmarais Library (**REF-DOC CA1 X1 D23**). As with the microfilm version, these are not official and are indexed at the end of each volume.

2) Modern Debates

In 1875, the House of Commons began reporting its own debates but depended on hired external people to handle the reporting. In 1880, the Commons replaced these people with an official staff to insure continuity and uniformity. These Debates are available, in both English and French, at the J.N. Desmarais Library (**REF-DOC CA1 X1 D23**).

The [Debates of the House of Commons](#) form a verbatim account of what is said in the House. The Debates, which are issued daily in pamphlet form, include:

- A record of the daily debates
- Messages of the Governor General
- Other pertinent information

Added to each Wednesday issue are appendices such as:

- Alphabetical lists of the Members of the House (constituencies, addresses, and political affiliations)
- A list of Standing and Standing Joint Committees
- A list of special and legislative Committees
- Members of the Cabinet Ministry
- A list of Parliamentary Secretaries

An index is issued four times a year. Until 1994, the Government replaced the pamphlet Debates with bound volumes which included indexes. Since then, it has been the responsibility of the recipient to either bind the pamphlets or store them in binders. **The J.N. Desmarais Library has adopted the binder solution.**

The bound Debates are indexed in each volume until 1906/1907 when the Government began to publish separate indexes. These are thin volumes bound in the same manner as the Debates. The page numbers of the Debates run continuously through all the volumes issued for any one session and, consequently, the page numbers given in the indexes can sometimes be very large. The page numbers for any volume are printed on the spine.

The Senate

1) Early Debates

The Senate began to publish its own Debates in 1871. It did not, however, have its own official staff until 1917. As with the early Debates of the House of Commons, those of the Senate (from 1867 to 1870) were also culled from contemporary newspapers.

The J.N. Desmarais Library has the Senate Debates from 1869 to 1871, then has no more until 1876. From that year onward the collection is virtually complete. In the case of the French language Debates, the collection begins with the year 1896/1897.

2) Modern Debates

The [Debates of the Senate](#) (**REF-DOC CA1 Y1 D32**) are also issued in pamphlet form daily. The Members of the Senate are permitted to amend or

correct this record, prior to being bound in volume format. The Debates issued for the first Thursday of every month contain several lists.

- Officers of the Senate
- Members of the Cabinet Ministry
- Members of the Senate
- Senate Standing
- Special and Special Joint Committees

An appendix entitled [**Progress of Legislation**](#) indicates the status of Bills. An index to the Debates is issued occasionally during the session. As with that of the House of Commons, the page numbers run continuously through the volumes of any one session and are printed onto the spine of each volume.